

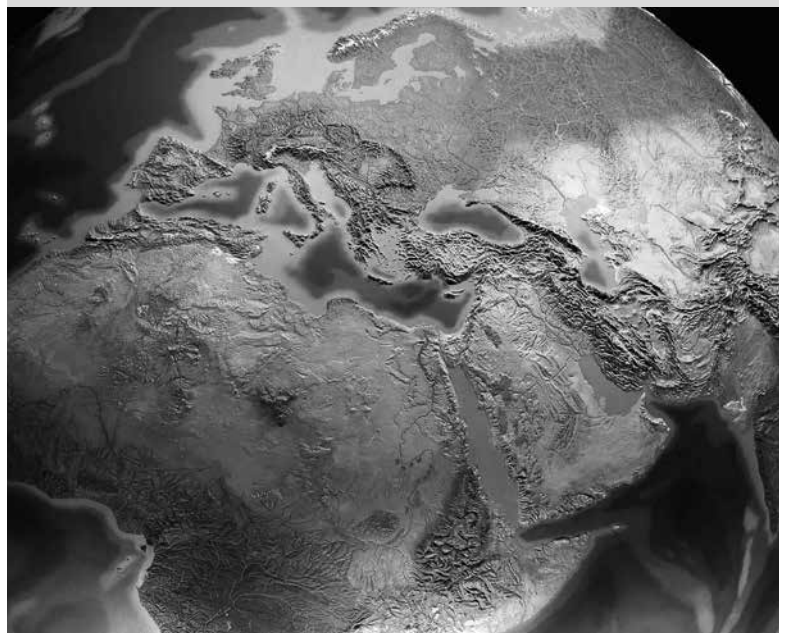
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HAS UNIVERSAL DEVELOPMENT COME OF AGE?

Editor Richard Longhurst



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Introduction: Universal Development – Research and Practice

Richard Longhurst

Abstract Development policy, practice and research have largely adhered to a North–South, geographic and aid-driven view of the world. Over the last ten years the approaches of South–South cooperation have also come to prominence. However, more attention is being paid to universal development based on the assumption that development challenges are as relevant for the North as for the South, with many common problems. More needs to be known about the nature of learning from South to North in order to complete the paradigm of universal development. The articles chosen for this Archive Collection are addressed to how South and North approaches to development can be interlinked: they show that this topic has been debated for many years. With the advent of the Sustainable Development Goals, there is now a framework in place with which to address a universal approach to development.

Keywords: universal development, universality, Sustainable Development Goals, South–North cooperation, development policy, development practice, development research.

1 Introduction¹

Models of development theory and practice are regularly redefined and then pursued. The most well-known is the development aid-driven model of North to South exchange of ideas, resources and skills. But there has been growing support for such exchanges to enhance learning between countries in the South – that is, South–South development – as well as South–North transfers of patterns of development. The completed paradigm of interconnected or universal development is one where research, practice and learning are fully shared in all directions between South and North, as well as within the South and within the North. Universal development addresses shared problems and challenges. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are an embodiment of this approach.

However, as this *IDS Bulletin* Archive Collection of ten articles shows, the idea that development should be seen as universal and not just the transferring of ideas and practice from North to South is not new,



despite contradicting the view of development aid prevailing in the 1970s and thereafter, and before, in the 1950s and 1960s. This Archive Collection reviews the research published in previous issues of the *IDS Bulletin* and other selected research on universal development, with examples of practice, and looks ahead to suggest how these ideas could be applied generally to make development studies and practice more universal. This is an important part of the next phase of global development, to evolve into universally shared challenges, ideas and practice. The selected articles cover the last 40 years and while the importance of the lessons they provide are generally relevant in the present day, obviously context has changed. Where possible, a 'then' and 'now' perspective is addressed. Many of the former 'North–South' geographic assumptions are now less valid, given the rapid advance of countries such as China and India; income, health and education have converged for many countries; there are rising problems of poverty and malnutrition in developed countries; and there are growing South–North flows of capital and technology.

The universal development approach is particularly relevant against the backdrop of shared and interconnected challenges such as climate change, resource degradation, migration and trafficking, shared technology, and growing inequality, and when the rise of populism and nationalism is undermining attempts to address many of these challenges in both North and South. Approaching these problems requires a more universal approach, which is the aim of the SDGs, now agreed and for which workable implementation is being sought. Some problems may only be solved by the universal approach, while others will benefit from new perspectives. But there are some drawbacks such as institutional constraints and transaction costs. For many people, the term 'universal' would be most commonly applied to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. Universalism has been defined as 'the human development approach of emphasizing the enhancement of freedoms for every human being and the 2030 Agenda by concentrating on leaving no one behind' (UNDP 2016: 45). Universal development can be described as 'where development is a matter for everyone everywhere, and comparative experiences and mutual learning in all directions are valued' (Leach 2016: 6), and more simply as 'development for all'.

The primary objectives of this article are to provide an overview of this *IDS Bulletin* and to: (1) commentate on the selected articles that have addressed universality, (2) link their significance to the present day, and (3) add some new material. In laying out the circular nature of universality – from North to South, South to South, and South to North – it is the third element that is weakest in terms of understanding. North to South has a long history and South to South is gathering momentum. The *IDS Bulletin* articles have focused primarily on seeing every problem as relating potentially to all countries in North and South (and East and West), whatever that issue may be: constraints and solutions will differ across countries, but not necessarily according to geographic divisions.

Key conclusions along the lines of ‘what works or does not work, where and why’ cannot be addressed in any detail within the limits of this overview. Ideally, this overview will be of interest to those outside the development community, as universal development in concept and practice will only make significant progress if advocated by this constituency.

After this introductory section, this article is organised in three further sections. Section 2 reviews ‘reassessments’ of development and of how universality has been addressed. Section 3 addresses five broad thematic areas where universal development was addressed directly, namely: (i) policy approaches to current national and global economic shocks, (ii) inequality and exclusion, (iii) approaching development through greater participation, (iv) democratic governance, and (v) global health. Although the sources for these themes are drawn mostly from *IDS Bulletin* articles, the last theme is treated differently. The lead is taken from practice – the well-known United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Lessons without Borders programme based on child health programmes applied in the United States (US). Some selective research findings are included in the case study. Section 4 provides some conclusions, and discussion of the SDGs.

For the purpose of choosing articles for this Archive Collection, most issues of the *IDS Bulletin* since the first was published in January 1968 were reviewed to assess approaches to, and examples of practice of, universal development. The archive articles are an eclectic selection: authors were writing about various thematic topics and believing that there could be lessons shared universally. For additional research literature, some material relating to the thematic areas was included. This was not generated systematically as it would have been a broad task. What has not been done (for now, at least) is a further step: to review *IDS Bulletin* articles from the perspective of how existing development research, generally conducted in and for developing countries, could be more widely applied.

There are several thematic areas not explored here that have used the universal development approach. These include, *inter alia*, rural development (Baviskar *et al.* 1980; Baviskar 1981; Korf and Oughton 2006), microfinance (Rogaly and Roche 1998), smallholder farming (Stringer, Twyman and Gibbs 2008), floodplain management and irrigation (Monbiot 2014; Lean 2014), malnutrition (IFPRI 2016), food policy (Constantine and Santarelli 2017), and education systems (Little 1988). It is expected that there are many other areas that would be pertinent such as urban development, gender empowerment and social welfare programmes. These and others would merit a thematic sub-section had space permitted.

In further thematic areas, there are several initiatives currently in progress at IDS to frame development as universal, straddling locations across North and South: the *World Social Science Report 2016* on inequality and social justice included contributions from 107 authors across 40 countries;

the Social, Technological and Environmental Pathways to Sustainability (STEPS) programme bridge-year projects involve hub linkages across countries, carrying out several comparative research projects; a proposal on the political economy of green transformations has been developed, including the UK and Germany; participatory action research initiatives, with engagement with farmer organisations in the UK, Senegal and Nicaragua; and the developmental impact of interactions between formal and informal institutions in Eastern Europe. Further, the International Centre for Tax and Development's research on international corporate taxation is relevant across countries. In addition, the Rockefeller project Market-based Solutions for the Extreme Poor included examples from the developed world context, and there have also been submissions of evidence to parliamentary enquiries on the implications for the UK of the SDGs, and contributions to debates on universality in the area of youth (Wignall 2016). Finally, the current work of the Centre for Rising Powers and Global Development focuses on exchanges of ideas and health and food policies between Brazil and the UK, including activities on food policy in conjunction with the Food Foundation (Constantine and Santarelli 2017).

2 Debates about universal development

At various times, issues of the *IDS Bulletin* have 're-assessed', 're-imagined', 're-framed', or 're-defined' development, starting with debates in the 1970s, with some specific topics in between, and then onto the IDS 40th and 50th anniversary conferences, in 2006 and 2016 respectively. The starting point for reassessments was: (i) the discussions over the Duncan Report (Seers 1969), the Pearson Commission (de Kadt 1969), and later, the Brandt Commission (Jolly and Joekees 1981); (ii) the Seers proposals (Seers 1977 and Singer 1989, both this *IDS Bulletin*; Seers 1979, 1983) and work on underdeveloped Europe (Seers, Schaffer and Kiljunen 1979; Seers and Vaitos 1980, 1982); (iii) the 'states or markets' debate in the 1980s and 1990s (Colclough and Manor 1991), acting as an important stepping stone; and then onto (iv) the IDS 40th anniversary conference 'Reinventing Development Research' (Haddad 2007, this *IDS Bulletin*) and to 'Reimagining Development' (Haddad *et al.* 2011), a global co-construction where 20–30 groups of people offered their reflections on a common set of questions, the results of which were published as the *IDS Bulletin* 'Time to Reimagine Development?'; and most recently, (v) the 50th anniversary (Leach 2016).

The preoccupation with development as aid, especially of donor-funded research, has largely pre-empted any notions of universal development. As Leach has observed:

Related to this context of complex, globally interconnected challenges is a fundamental shift away from old aid-related paradigms and their framing in North–South terms, towards an assumption that development challenges are as relevant for Europe and North America as they are in Africa, Asia or Latin America, with scope for comparative insights and learning in multiple directions. This taken-for-granted sense of what one can term a 'universal

agenda'... was a striking feature of the IDS 50th anniversary conference. It signals a different set of discourses from even a decade earlier, when the IDS 40th anniversary conference marked out such a universal take as an aspiration (Edwards 2007) (Leach 2016: 5).

Connecting, learning and sharing are key pivots in the universal agenda. The global knowledge economy is changing as innovations in all parts of the world are changing old notions, moving towards South–South and South–North, leading to a Universalist view (*ibid.*).

The first major focus on universal development was promoted by Dudley Seers, where he convened debates and discussions at IDS in the 1970s and early 1980s. As Singer pointed out:

... the insights that Dudley gained about the problems of developing countries could be transferred back to the industrialised countries, and would be very helpful in dealing with our own development problems (Singer 1989: 5, this *IDS Bulletin*).

Seers proposed, in a manner that mirrors debates 40 years later (see also Singer 1989, this *IDS Bulletin*; Seers 1979; Seers with IDS M.Phil. Faculty and Students 1977; Longhurst 2016):²

The convention is that development studies cover only the 'developing' countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, a sort of academic counterpart of OXFAM. But this convention is ceasing to be viable for European social scientists, and indeed that is starting to be harmful. The assumption that 'their' problems are intrinsically different from 'ours' is not merely patronising; it has become a hindrance to the transfer of experience. It is also associated with political commitment of a sort that hinders progress (Seers 1977: 6, this *IDS Bulletin*).

These insights were extended to Europe (where the artificiality of the distinction between 'developed' and 'developing' was most obvious), applying methodologies developed in relation to developing countries, especially concepts of 'backwash' (where development in one location causes adverse effects in the peripheral areas), and core-periphery relations (Seers *et al.* 1979), a concept originating in development studies. Western Europe had its own core and periphery; there was a definite geographical pattern, with the European periphery forming a ring around the core. Presciently, Seers proposed that insights acquired in the development field threw light on several European policy issues, including those raised by the enlargement of the European Economic Community. In the spirit of universal development and mutual learning, the geographical extension of development studies would both contribute to a deeper understanding of European problems and also throw light on the problems of the countries conventionally covered by development studies (Seers 1977: 7, this *IDS Bulletin*).

Singer's later analysis of Seers' work using a Keynesian lens (Singer 1989, this *IDS Bulletin*) noted that John Maynard Keynes himself

did not take any interest in development problems or developing countries, and made no attempt himself to apply his framework to developing countries. Seers' work on the 'special case' of local models in developed countries (Seers 1963) showed differences from that of developing countries. Seers later tried to develop a model better suited to the conditions of developing countries by treating them as part of an international periphery – the centre/periphery view – and emphasised again that insights gained could help in dealing with UK problems (including appropriate technology, the informal sector, the role of transnational corporations, dealing with depressed areas and economic inequalities). This critique by Singer of Seers (and by Toye 1989) provides a good discussion of the importance of context in the application of economics from North to South and vice versa. Seers' approach was developed as a result of field experience, particularly in the International Labour Organization (ILO) Employment Missions in the 1970s and earlier work in the West Indies. Moving from policy and reality to theory was shared with Keynes: this involved moving from concentration on growth to employment to basic needs, poverty, and income distribution, all influenced by field experience. Keynes then turned to revise the models with which he worked.³

Further discussion was generated by the Brandt Commission recommendations (Jolly and Joekes 1981) that proposed strong and enlarged support to North–South negotiations, and recommended a transfer of resources from developed to developing countries, giving new life to earlier North–South proposals but emphasising a dual relationship, called mutual self-interest.

Reassessment at the IDS 40th anniversary conference raised the question of 'development for whom?' (Haddad 2007, this *IDS Bulletin*). This conference summary reported on the anniversary roundtables that took place in many countries across the globe, so reflecting the views of a wide range of professionals, both researchers and practitioners. Development had become more global, inequality was rising in many countries, and the capacity to use and generate knowledge was increasing outside the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. China's emergence challenged Western assumptions about how development happens. There were new sources of financial capital for development initiatives and sources of information; civil society was forming new transnational alliances; and sustainable development was being questioned in terms of carbon consumption levels. The spheres of influence of the aid donors were shrinking; and the boundaries between domestic and international policies were blurred as national identities reconfigured and the interdependence of nations intensified (*ibid.*).

A rebirth of development research was approached in the context of three aspects of global change: convergence, divergence and accountability.⁴ Convergence was seen in the ebb and flow of identities around religion, sexuality, ethnicity and nationhood; climate change and energy use; the conflation of development and security; and the

emergence of China as a global player. Issues such as international migration and increasing inequality were of global concern. Divergence implied many pathways to development and it was argued that the space to discuss these pathways was opening up, yet there was little integration between these pathways (Edwards 2007). The West or North were no longer acceptable as the yardstick for success, let alone as the target to be aimed for. On accountability, the development industry had much to say about the responsibility of others, but little to say about its own performance. Development research also avoided saying much about ethics, and routinely avoided the private sector.

Ten years later, in summing up the IDS 50th anniversary conference, Melissa Leach (2016) proposed that long-standing but marginalised perspectives and debates from the global South offered new values and ideas, not being confined to a North–South axis let alone as a view of development just as aid. She expressed that emerging alliances and alternatives were not led by the concerns of Northern intellectuals and policymakers, and the North–South paradigm did not measure up to ever-more complex problems.

3 Thematic areas

3.1 Policy approaches to current national and global economic shocks

The relationship between policy, reality and theory is evident in the *IDS Bulletin* on ‘Britain: A Case for Development?’ (Jolly and Luckham 1977, this *IDS Bulletin*) at a time of economic crisis caused by the 1973–74 oil price shock (Jolly 1977, this *IDS Bulletin*). Its editors set off with a sense of hesitation, doubting the *direct* analogy between Britain and the developing countries:

... there are many similarities: structural unemployment, inflation and balance of payments difficulties; the emigration of professional manpower; the visiting expert from the IMF [International Monetary Fund]; regional imbalance and the difficulty of inducing investment and expansion... they indicate shared features of underdevelopment, rather than comparable patterns of development (Jolly and Luckham 1977: 1, this *IDS Bulletin*).

There were also shared social and political problems which recession had sharpened: addressing Scottish, Welsh and Irish nationalism; racial conflict; political violence; persistent poverty; the erosion of the welfare state; and corruption and decay in police and local government bureaucracies. It was argued, however, that there were critical differences between North and South with many problems of overdevelopment, or the wrong kind of development, such as a small or overspecialised agricultural sector, disease patterns and overconsumption in Britain. Those who argued that rapid growth and industrialisation did not necessarily bring benefits to developing countries could identify parallels in the over-industrialisation in Britain. ‘Britain: A Case for Development?’ advocated a less growth-oriented, more self-reliant strategy of change for Britain.

In terms of connections, Jolly (1977, this *IDS Bulletin*), echoing a common theme at the time of 'Redistribution with Sloth [growth]', proposed that some of the UK's economic ills could benefit from the concepts of basic needs and national self-reliance – approaches and priorities suggested in analyses of developing country problems. Poverty, employment problems, inequality, foreign exchange difficulties and heavy international 'dependence' arose as much from the structure and pattern of a country's development as from its growth rate. At that time most economic analyses of Britain's economic difficulties proposed that slow growth was at the heart of the problem, with an acceleration of growth the obvious cure. Had the lessons of recent employment studies in the developing countries been applied to Britain, the emphasis would have been on structural factors as the main causes of unemployment and structural change rather than growth as the critical need. A structural approach covered analysis of the underlying trends and problems of the economy and a disaggregated analysis of unemployment itself, pointing to the different factors bearing on the unemployment of different groups. A structural approach to policy was absent from the then mainstream debate on employment policy in Britain.

The editors noted (Jolly and Luckham 1977: 3, this *IDS Bulletin*) that it was one thing to advocate a less growth-oriented, more self-reliant strategy of change in Britain, but quite another to put it into effect, moving from analysis to implementation. That *IDS Bulletin* in 1977 addressed some of the 'so what?' questions, but it is hard to believe that economic advisers in better-off countries would say they were taking advice from the experience of less well-off countries. Then, that would have been reputational suicide. This work is an early reminder that the key issue of poverty and inequality has been running through the work of IDS and its partners for over 40 years.

Predominant in the debates of the 1980s was the questioning of the neoliberal agenda of 'getting prices right', decreasing the role of the public sector to reduce expenditure (Colclough and Manor 1991), and privatising services. Evidence later emerged that austerity programmes in the South in the 1980s that cut back the role of the state – structural adjustment – did not work in terms of stimulating growth and reducing poverty. But this has not stopped austerity programmes being implemented in the North. Evidence from Latin America (George 2013) provides five lessons from the Latin American debt crises of 1982–89 and 2001–02 that are applicable to present-day Europe. The most important are that fiscal reform alone cannot solve a debt crisis; austerity must be an element of a larger strategy and not the strategy itself; and economic growth is important.

The evaluations of International Monetary Fund (IMF) advice and synthesis evidence from *Be Outraged*, written by Richard Jolly and colleagues (2012), argue that countries undergoing austerity in Europe, such as Greece and the UK, could also learn much from the African

experiences in the 1980s and 1990s. IMF-led structural adjustment forced governments to cut spending by eliminating subsidies and implementing strict financial retrenchment, which was expected to reduce government deficits and make countries economically stable. This was disastrous for many African nations. Lay-offs, privatisations, salary cuts and reduced spending made it harder for African countries to pursue a long-term development agenda and resulted in more indebtedness, which caused more suffering and increased poverty in almost every African country where IMF prescriptions were followed. This all shows that this universal approach is still valid: austerity and rising poverty within many 'North' countries (combined with rapid advances in many of the previously poorer countries) make old North–South assumptions inappropriate.

3.2 Inequality and exclusion

With the growing emphasis on inequality in the 1990s (and continuing to the present day), exchanges of ideas across different contexts were deemed valuable in the *IDS Bulletin* on 'Poverty and Social Exclusion in South and North' (de Haan and Maxwell 1998 and Maxwell 1998, both this *IDS Bulletin*) but writing papers about *developed* countries was still regarded as an unusual exercise from an institute specialising in *developing* countries. The justification lay in the rapid growth of research on the new concept of 'social exclusion',⁵ a concept initially developed in and for the North.

That issue of the *IDS Bulletin* in 1998 addressed two sets of questions. First, how does the new thinking on social exclusion relate to the large body of work on poverty and poverty reduction? Is 'social exclusion' merely a re-labelling or an explanation of poverty? Second, does the new debate in the North offer opportunities for dialogue between North and South? Does the debate on social exclusion in the North offer new lessons for the South? Conversely, are there insights from the South that will enrich debate in the North? The interim conclusion was that social exclusion and new poverty thinking overlap almost completely when it comes to describing poverty, and also overlap in terms of explanation.

Attempts to learn between North and South were fruitful, with opportunities to compare and contrast. The same issue of the *IDS Bulletin* highlighted a number of areas where connections could be made, which included the nature of active labour policies designed for people to find work, the nature of participation in development programmes (Gaventa 1998, this *IDS Bulletin*, see Section 3.3 below), alternative routes to reform of social welfare, and the value of food security analysis. It also extended the debate on poverty through the lens of social exclusion.

Maxwell (1998, this *IDS Bulletin*) referred to the work of Seers in the context of social exclusion, also suggesting appropriate structural change as one means to reduce inequalities. Elements of this (in 1998) that were relevant to both North and South include structuring

the state, poverty reduction and livelihoods, political development and governance, gender inequality, social capital, and agency and participation, plus social exclusion. Maxwell proposed that it was better to avoid direct solutions and to approach learning between different contexts in terms of comparisons, connections and convergences. Increasing attention to poverty and social exclusion (PSE) in the North opens the possibility of fertile dialogue between North and South on three questions: (1) are there new comparisons or lessons to be drawn across geographical boundaries about the characteristics, causes and remedies of PSE? (2) does a rapid increase in PSE in the North signal a new convergence between North and South? and (3) are there theories which will expose connections between PSE in North and South? Did globalisation mean we are now all developing countries?

This work programme was furthered by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), under the meeting series title, *Lessons Without Borders: Conversations across the Boundary between Developed and Developing Countries*. Public events and briefings were organised by ODI and the New Policy Institute in 1999–2000 (Kenway and Maxwell 1999; Maxwell and Kenway 2000) to seek common ground across the North–South boundary with a particular focus on poverty, building on UK initiatives on the subject (e.g. the UK annual report on poverty and social exclusion (UK Department of Social Security 2000)) as well as international initiatives, including Copenhagen Plus Five⁶ and publication of the World Bank 2001 *World Development Report* on poverty (Kanbur *et al.* 2000).

Maxwell's introduction to the first event pointed out that the human development discourse in the South was very similar to the social exclusion discourse in the North, with both stressing a multidimensional perspective on poverty. The social exclusion paradigm goes far in offering a causal model, focusing on PSE in the area of rights, resources and relationships, while the development debate of the time appeared to give greater importance to notions of participation and empowerment than in the UK.⁷

3.3 Approaching development through greater participation

In the late 1990s to early 2000s, the work of Gaventa and colleagues on 'champions of participation' (Gaventa 1999, 2004) brought together researchers and practitioners to explore the problems and potential for strengthening citizen participation in local government. This engagement brought forward participatory approaches to budgeting; processes of participatory planning; new forms of partnerships between citizens, the government and other stakeholders; new methods of consultation and inclusion; and opportunities for citizen participation in service delivery. There was strong learning between higher- and lower-income countries, especially in participatory approaches to budgeting, in particular through shared experiences between Brazil and the UK.

Earlier work by Gaventa with the Highlander Center on South and North exchanges was important in developing participatory approaches in poor parts of the US. The Champions of Participation event was set up to show what could be done using participatory methods in local government, using funds from the UK international and domestic ministries. The role and impact of participatory approaches developed in poor marginalised communities in the South when applied to situations in the North has been well documented.⁸ Approaches to increase the participation of people in poor countries have relevance in empowering people in richer countries (Gaventa 1999). This research described the links between the concepts of participation and social exclusion and the challenges offered by globalisation, linking and learning from common problems in the North and South.

Gaventa (1999) integrates social exclusion and participation. Lack of participation in itself is a form of social exclusion – inclusion is a goal to be achieved in itself. Participation is a means of overcoming other problems to enable the excluded to act more effectively. The unemployed may be organised to participate in strategies for overcoming unemployment or for job creation; youth organisations may be encouraged to participate in issues affecting youth, immigrants or minorities. There can, of course, be ‘Souths within the North’ just as there may be ‘Norths within the South’ (Gaventa 1998, this *IDS Bulletin*).

The literature generated at IDS and elsewhere on participation in South and North provides much useful information on context; *inter alia*, who should participate locally so that capacity, energy and momentum generated at grass roots is continued, often in the face of resistance from traditional powerholders. More than mandating or legislating participation is needed, requiring ongoing intervention from the top to ensure its implementation, and to help intermediary elites to understand or accept new participation. In all contexts, prior social capital and organisational capacity matters, with a history of trust and working together being valuable. There must also be institutional capacity with flexible mindsets; some form of participatory monitoring and evaluation is needed to measure whether quality participation is occurring. Finally, participation may not be enough as promoting participatory approaches is also affected by broader forces and must be linked to other policies for change (Gaventa 2004).

Gaventa (1998: 54, this *IDS Bulletin*) draws some important lessons for participation from the US for participation policy in the South: *inter alia*, participation policy, who participates, and the definition of participation all matter; also important are participation and power, prior social capital, and organisational, governmental or institutional capacity.

Participatory budgeting is a well-known example of a programming element introduced in the South, adopted in the North, and used in both contexts (see Porto de Oliveira 2017; Sintomer, Herzberg and Allegretti 2010; Department for Communities and Local Government 2011;

Gaventa and Benequista 2009). Originating in Brazil in 1989, it involved a series of local assemblies where residents and elected budget officials identified spending priorities and voted on the priorities to implement. Participatory budgeting then spread to cities in Latin America, Europe, Asia and Africa. This was introduced to the UK by the Labour government in 2008, and by 2011 £28m was allocated via participatory budgets to 1,500 projects in England and trialled in Newcastle and Bradford. The UK government set a target in 2008 of 1 per cent of all local government funds to be allocated in this manner, but the use of participatory budgeting then struggled under the coalition government of 2010 which severely cut local government budgets.

3.4 Democratic governance

Research on democratic governance has developed the concept of democratic spaces that could be applied across all geographic contexts (Cornwall 2004 and Barnes *et al.* 2004, both this *IDS Bulletin*; Cornwall 2008). The Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability generated a series of case studies from a variety of political and cultural contexts: Brazil, India, Bangladesh, Mexico, South Africa, UK and the US. Contributors to the *IDS Bulletin* 'New Democratic Spaces' (Cornwall 2004) explored the interfaces between different forms of public engagement, showing arenas that were neither new nor democratic but paradoxically appeared to hold promise for deepening democracy in North and South. Their studies addressed questions about the political efficacy of citizen engagement and the viability of these new arenas of public institutions, involving new networks and alliances of actors, which may be government-provided or more transient spaces.

The research questions in that 2004 issue of the *IDS Bulletin* were based on how new democratic experiments meet and transform older forms of governance, as political space for public engagement in governance appeared to be widening. Greater attention was focused on the institutions at the interface between the public, providers and policymakers. This work drew on examples of participatory budgeting from Brazil, health watch committees in Bangladesh, and *panchayats* in India to demonstrate how things could be done better in the UK in terms of engaging a more democratic approach. The one-size-fits-all development rhetoric about governance and institutions played out in very different ways across different cultural, social and political settings. 'Invited spaces' offered the *potential* for reconfiguring relations of rule, extending the practice of democracy beyond the sporadic use of the ballot box. They were embedded in the particular cultural and political configurations making up governance in that context. Such 'spaces' had to be situated in institutional landscapes as one among other domains of association in and out of which actors moved, carrying relationships, resources, identities and identifications.

In the UK, Barnes *et al.* (2004, this *IDS Bulletin*) described a context in which there had been considerable innovation in the form of regular

bodies or passing ways of seeking opinion. There was a tension between different ‘opportunity structures for participation’, identifying two forms in the UK: one that is open to the general public and another that seeks ‘representation’ by enlisting representatives from existing groups. In practice these two forms often overlapped, leading to further tensions and questions about the nature of representation, with important implications for legitimacy. Where authorities set rules for inclusion, groups could choose either to comply, create their own structures, or *create* identities when they participated. This analysis resonates with many of the articles in Cornwall (2004) in suggesting that citizens need their own spaces in which they can develop alternative approaches, at some distance from arenas which bring the public and their representatives together with officials.

The observations of Taylor *et al.* (2004) focused on some of the difficulties with which the voluntary and community sector in England has come to view government-created ‘invited spaces’ – seen as ‘popular spaces’ – from which people are able to mobilise, build alliances and gain the confidence to. There was a proliferation of new spaces for ‘third sector’ involvement in policy processes under the UK Labour administration of 1997–2010.

The research by Barnes *et al.* and Taylor *et al.* highlighted some of the complexities of deliberative governance in two English cities, and of the relations involved. There was a complicated relational picture between councillors, members of the public and officers. The articles in ‘New Democratic Spaces’ (Cornwall 2004) show how a cross-sectional group of countries from North and South can provide helpful perspectives to address common problems, here addressing direct forms of citizen engagement to meet the ‘democratic deficit’ – by strengthening democratic institutions, and urging politicians and bureaucrats to listen more to become more responsive to those they serve. The concept of *space* allowed dialogue about participation, highlighting the relations of power and nature of citizenship that permeated public engagement. Authors of articles in ‘New Democratic Spaces’ used the term ‘spaces’, and three ingredients appear to be critical: (1) ruling party disposition to supporting popular participation, (2) popular mobilisation, and (3) a sufficiently resourced, well-coordinated state bureaucracy. Again the nature of context matters.

At the tail end of the 1990s, ‘civil society participation’ was on everybody’s lips. Today, in 2017, harder questions are being asked (Buddery, Parsfield and Shafique 2016). National government austerity measures and the increasing demand by UK citizens on the welfare state has introduced a crisis for the public sector. New approaches to engaging local participation are needed. Here, the argument for learning from both developing and developed countries is that the UK needs more creative thinking and that drawing on examples from the South might help, going beyond the comfort of the consultation culture.

3.5 Global health

As noted in Section 1, this sub-section addresses universality on a different basis from other themes of this *IDS Bulletin* overview. Global health issues are an important area where lessons can be shared between North and South (Crisp 2010). The topic is addressed partially here but primarily recounts well-known experiences of the USAID–Carnegie Council Lessons without Borders programme in various cities of the US in the late 1990s (Government Publishing Office 1994; Van Dusen 1998). Some additional research is also highlighted here.

In 1994, USAID supported a programme called Lessons without Borders, beginning with a conversation about the cost of health care in the US, when officials from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention believed there could be cost savings from using oral rehydration salts (ORS) in the US.⁹ Continued discussions showed that other international strategies and practices could be used in the US. Immunisation rates in the US were low, but infant mortality rates were high. As a result there was follow-up in Seattle, Washington, Baltimore and Boston.

In Baltimore, the mayor sent a team to Kenya to observe implementation of the programme; then, between 1994 and 1998, immunisation coverage in Baltimore rose from 60 per cent to above 90 per cent. A team went to Bangladesh to learn how community health workers could disseminate practical information throughout communities. Other teams looked at how gang violence was addressed in the Caribbean and how environmental health information was being provided to literate populations. All of this was done with municipal funds. The programme was successful, for various reasons.

At the time, foreign aid was not popular; there was a recession in the early 1990s. USAID, not being able to spend its funds in the US, wanted to show that foreign aid could benefit the domestic population. There was strong support for the idea of using lessons learned in Kenya for immunisation campaigns in Baltimore at the local level from the mayor. The approach was to be more cost-effective when measures showed that the US was lagging behind some poorer nations in terms of child mortality.

At the national level, there was strong support by the USAID administrator Brian Atwood, also supported by Al Gore, then Vice President of the US, which provided champions at national and local levels. Most importantly, the programme was technically and economically sound: progress could be measured to show it was working; results were clear and it was low-cost and cost-effective.

There were other programmes tried in Washington to use sports as a way of helping young women to gain confidence, not to drop out of school, and to resist gang issues; and there were other attempts in the area of microenterprises and agricultural technologies, for example, but they had no political champion. These programmes were not continued

because when a new administration came in (Bush–Cheney in 2000), new ideas were pursued.

There are other approaches proposed to combine the learning from rich and poor countries to give new insights to improve health (Crisp 2010). For example, staff could be trained and deployed in different ways, and to bring public health, community social care and clinical medicine closer together. New policy, practices and products from poorer countries that might have application in richer countries are the use of conditional cash transfers to incentivise healthy behaviour, changing drug-giving protocols where patients rarely attend outpatient clinics, new forms of treating cataracts, and better long-term outcomes for schizophrenia through inclusion and community involvement (Crisp 2010: 116). Other possibilities include learning from treating mental health (Patel and Cohen 2003).

However, although common lessons involve the use of medical technology (in this case, vaccines) and appear as a universal and neutral good, they are deeply bound up with politics (Poltorak *et al.* 2005; Leach and Fairhead 2007). An agenda of mutual North–South self-interest has played a role in pushing immunisation up international public agendas. This research showed understanding of what causes parents to have their children vaccinated (or not) in different settings. Parental anxieties played a role, and this research compared and contrasted local understandings of health issues with anxieties of parents bringing up young children in southern England at the time of the controversy over the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine with routine immunisation in four countries in West Africa. It was also an exploration of what institutions involved with vaccination and public health policy assume is going on. Medical technologies are introduced into a context with immediate and wider political dimensions. Context matters and juxtapositions are needed to broaden the debate to more global and universal contexts. There are hidden commonalities as well as differences in the ways that parents in European and African settings are dealing with their children’s wellbeing, each other, and state and global institutions in today’s world.

4 Conclusions: Learning and practice

Has universal development come of age? This review shows that the foundations were built a long time ago and have been periodically strengthened. Some building of walls was started as development professionals tried to put the ideas and approaches into practice, but to continue the buildings analogy, planning permission from the powerful to continue was never given in terms of research funding and professional accreditation of those promoting universal development ideas. Reputational risk was at stake. Bureaucracies, the media and the general public were all sceptical about the architecture and whether these buildings would be viable and stand up. Learning has often faltered. But now greater acceptance of, and support for, these approaches is evident. The time has come for all who believe in universal development to build, to provide concrete justifications and experience of what things would

look like. This is not only because of the existence of the SDGs and the related opportunities, but because the greater global interconnectivity that will be brought to bear has never been more needed. However, new ideas and approaches are never value-free nor introduced into neutral situations: there are contestations, with difficulties in learning and in 'unlearning' of current ideas, and the baggage of the politics of change. There are also transaction costs. Conventional joint efforts to address shared problems such as programming partnerships and negotiating joint agreements and conventions – the normal apparatus of global governance – cannot easily address these challenges because there are still dominant partners.¹⁰ The articles reviewed here say much about this, and provide some good signposts for the way forward.

Universal development cannot be applied to every issue: it should not become a new development fad, just to wither after a while. What works (and does not work) now needs to be addressed, and some points relating to its enabling environment are mentioned below. It is better to say that certain overall preconditions should be met, rather than say it works in one sector or another. Also, this should not be seen as a geographical binary divide. Different groupings of countries may be relevant, not the developed/developing divide. The objective of this introduction is to 'set out the table' with key issues; the next stage is to start to cook and eat the meals. There are some exciting opportunities ahead for research and practice, but the topic needs to be addressed by those both inside and outside the development community.

4.1 Poverty, inequality and powerlessness as a key theme

Poverty, whether in North or South, was identified throughout from the 1970s onwards and in the key themes. Reassessments of development have held poverty in its various facets as pivotal, *inter alia* including unemployment, lack of voice, exclusion from governance processes, marginalisation and lack of reach of state services. Many people in developed and developing countries suffer from the same problems, and sharing ways of dealing with these problems is likely to improve policies. Discrimination, exclusion and intolerance occur everywhere and run counter to universalism (UNDP 2016).

4.2 Professional and funding barriers

There is a practical barrier of funding boundaries and professional expertise in agencies that provide research and programme funds. Funds and people are either 'for' the North or 'for' the South and the choice is mostly a binary one.¹¹ Budgets are set up for 'overseas' or for 'domestic', not for both, and the same applies to professional skills. There is a lack of willingness to take reputational risks using something that has worked in a different context, together with organisational set-ups along departmental lines, and time taken to learn across boundaries. There are a variety of institutional contexts that show some promise today – small non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that focus on a specific topic, larger NGOs and governments that have domestic and international departments working in the same building

learning from each other; parliamentary visits, insightful journalists, volunteer programmes, and others. All have potential and could have a vision that such essentially experimental work can be started.

4.3 Perceptions, the media, and public opinion

Although some biases are deeply held, the reaction of the media and public opinion can change rapidly, more so in these febrile times. The media may try to convince people that their communities could not benefit from ideas from unrelated parts of the world. There are the perceptions of the UK public that development means ‘aid’ (and then only ‘disaster relief’) and the strong criticisms that come with it. The ‘labelling’ of this topic needs to be addressed. But there can also be a positive media aspect, especially since social media is universal across locations and can be effective. Many of the innovations and research studies have focused on participation and the creation of ‘space’. This has involved bringing people into decision-making, using participatory action methods, finding out what communities want and need, and then ensuring they are brought into decision-making and building voice. This can trigger public acceptance. Areas (in the North) such as social care, treating mental health, addressing youth violence and violence on women, are crying out for solutions.

4.4 Learning and unlearning

There are the ever-present issues of learning and the context in which it is applied. Organisations find it hard to learn: as well as separate budgets for different programmes, there are different shades of professional skills, with the pressure to deliver, and the structure of bureaucracies.¹² In terms of what works in these circumstances, the IDS Centre for Rising Powers and Global Development proposed a three-part framework: (1) technical aspect, in terms of exchange of know-how; (2) process, in terms of how knowledge is exchanged – the cultural element; and (3) politics, the advocacy that both legitimises some mutual learning and the disabling of previous mindsets (IDS 2016).

More attention could be devoted to see how the private sector addresses issues of innovation and cross-cultural exchanges. If an idea works and the innovation is effective then the origin does not matter that much to the private sector. There also need to be well-resourced institutions in the South with sufficient capacity to harvest ideas and programmes, assess their potential and promote their scaling up. There is potential for cities to link up across this false binary divide: cities can do things that national governments and countries cannot do.

4.5 Context is everything

Researchers say ‘context is everything’ and ‘situations are always complex’. What is needed is to pick out those elements of a situation which overlap between different locations, suggest that preconditions exist for take-up, and convince practitioners. Researchers need to take risks. Some structuring is needed, and there has to be careful analysis of what lessons can be transferred. Analysis and policy for one country cannot be

read off directly from another, even within the broad groupings of North and South; opportunities should not be missed to compare and contrast. A common framework may not work as multiple realities would need multiple theories, and new efforts need to be made to explore common problems brought on by convergence and develop new theory together (de Haan and Maxwell 1998, this *IDS Bulletin*). Researchers' objectives should be to identify differences, if any, and not assume them.

4.6 The coming of the SDGs

The coming of the SDGs is significant. This is a universal agenda because for the first time all countries from North and South (and East and West) have agreed a common agenda and shared accountability. The most recent United Nations *Human Development Report* (HDR) (UNDP 2016) states the need for new development paradigms to ensure nobody is left behind. From the foreword of the report:

Barriers to universalism include, among others, deprivations and inequalities, discrimination and exclusion, social norms and values, and prejudice and intolerance... also... mutually reinforcing gender barriers that deny many women the opportunities and empowerment necessary to realise the full potential of their lives (UNDP 2016: iii).

The HDR argues, among other things, that those left behind can benefit from universal policies. What might happen now? First, the media and global interest concerning the SDGs will help in developing and promoting a universal agenda, and the SDGs will definitely be a hook for this, supported by the United Nations. Second, a universal agenda will address genuine problems of context, complexity, scale and acceptability, and common problems and phenomena such as trafficking, climate change, migration and terrorism. But richer countries still have to buy into the SDGs: there is still much to do in terms of implementation, and progress assessed across all countries, and the lessons and evidence as part of the universal agenda can contribute significantly to this. The HDR emphasises the need to translate universalism into practice by identifying and breaking down barriers that exclude certain groups, narrowing gaps in life chances among people, proposing policy options that fit contexts and levels of development, and identifying institutional shortcomings. All people in all circumstances are not equally disadvantaged.

4.7 Where do we go now on 'what works'?

There are several suggestions from the articles in this *IDS Bulletin*, including the use of public works, conditional cash transfers and promotion of social protection more broadly, building up social institutions for family welfare, microfinance and small-scale credit, and others. It should now be possible to craft better policies and solutions to problems by drawing on a wider range of perspectives other than what works in our own backyard, addressing questions such as: How can the UK social security system learn from the experiences of social protection programmes in South America and Africa, as well as vice versa? How can the system of social and mental care learn from systems

of care in the communities worldwide... and so on? Researchers now have the capacity to address this.

4.8 Back to the future?

Finally, how would Dudley Seers as the originator of many of these ideas have reacted if he looked back? In terms of his work, much has been aimed at the vulnerable and disadvantaged in society, and the focuses on exclusion and income distribution have been underlying themes for some of this work. He would have welcomed the focus on participation which allowed people to fashion their own views and ‘definitions’ of development. He would have been pleased that employment levels are being taken much more seriously as an indicator of the level of development of nations. He would have been positive about the role of exchange of technology, such as mobile phones, where a poor farmer in Haiti and a financial trader in the city of London put the same item to good use. But overall, he might have been disappointed that we still work mainly in silos, some on developed countries and others on developing, and that applying findings on development to problems in the UK and Europe has not received more support nor been translated into real action to help reduce poverty, while no institution has been set up to connect these insights and actions. Are our own teaching and research institutions designed to promote these ideas and actions?

Notes

- 1 I would like to acknowledge the help I have received from Alison Norwood and Gary Edwards in managing the publication of this *IDS Bulletin*. I also appreciate the support from IDS Director Melissa Leach and Research Director John Gaventa. Thanks also to Richard Jolly and Frances Stewart for very helpful reviews, and to Peter Bailey, Lawrence Haddad, Kerrie Howard, Bonnie Koenig, Simon Maxwell, Sarah Mistry and Ann Van Dusen for earlier conversations. However, I am solely responsible for the views expressed. All of the archive articles are reprinted as published at the time without change. Authors’ views may have changed since the time of publication.
- 2 See Toye (1987) for a similar review of the internationalisation of development studies.
- 3 Debate also revolved around Dudley Seers as the director of the two-year MPhil course. In 1975–77, the students challenged the preoccupation in the syllabus on issues in ‘developing countries’, asking why there was hardly any consideration of development policy and experience in Britain itself. In response, Seers adapted the syllabus to include a major case study of a new concern for British policy: the discovery of North Sea oil and its implications for development policy in Scotland and the rest of the UK in general. The paper can be found as Chapter 3 in Jolly (2012). The definition was not clear-cut. Many ‘developing countries’ have higher per capita incomes than some of the ‘developed’ countries. Also, typical problems of ‘developing countries’ – foreign exchange shortage, persistent unemployment and unremitting inflation – can be found in

- Southern Europe too (Seers with IDS M.Phil. Faculty and Students 1977; IDS M.Phil. Faculty and Students 1977). The role of the state was a key element then and has ever since been a source of debate.
- 4 Compare these with Maxwell's three aspects of comparisons, convergence and connections as features of development studies in North and South (Maxwell 1998, this *IDS Bulletin*), and Lipton's three suggestions of analogues, interactions and conceptual transfers (Lipton 1987, in Drabek 1987) and 'juxtapositions' (Leach and Fairhead 2007).
 - 5 Defined as 'the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live' (de Haan and Maxwell 1998: 2, this *IDS Bulletin*).
 - 6 In 2000, the UN General Assembly called a special session five years on from the adoption of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action at the World Summit on Social Development held in March 1995.
 - 7 After these meetings in 1999–2000, held jointly between ODI and the New Policy Institute, ODI convened a meeting in 2007 with the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Overseas Development (APGOOD) to address the question of whether policymakers and practitioners can learn lessons about poverty reduction strategies across the boundary between developed and developing countries. The speaker was the Rt Hon. Hilary Benn MP, then Secretary of State for International Development at the Department for International Development. Mr Benn cited a number of areas where learning could be shared between South and North; he also stated that successful development was going to depend on sharing expertise and knowledge and that this should not be one-way traffic (Benn 2007). The possibilities for shared learning included education and training, microfinance and participatory budgeting, and democratic processes.
 - 8 For example, the IDS Participation Resource Centre has over 25 studies of participation methods carried out in the UK.
 - 9 It should be noted that this was 12 years after the United Nations Children's Fund had started promoting ORS in developing countries in 1982, often with USAID support.
 - 10 Seers had challenged the United Nations in 1977 (Seers 1977: 7, this *IDS Bulletin*): 'If certain countries of Europe, including Britain, and the Third World share problems with common causes, then is there not a basis for much greater cooperation in international fora, such as UNCTAD [United Nations Conference on Trade and Development], on many issues for example monitoring the TNCs [transnational corporations]? And might not European governments benefit from technical assistance from agencies with international experience in problems like structural unemployment (e.g. the ILO)?'
 - 11 The situation can be summed up (from Colin McFarlane of the Open University): 'These categories are active imaginative barriers that militate against the possibility of different countries to learn from one another' (McFarlane 2006).
 - 12 Richard Rose of the University of Strathclyde: 'Elected officials searching for lessons prefer to turn to those whose overall political values are consistent with their own...' (Rose 1991: 17).

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Glossary

- APGOOD** All-Party Parliamentary Group on Overseas Development
- EADI** European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes
- EEC** European Economic Community
- HDR** Human Development Report
- IDS** Institute of Development Studies
- IFPRI** International Food Policy Research Institute
- ILO** International Labour Organization
- IMF** International Monetary Fund
- MMR** measles, mumps and rubella
- NGO** non-governmental organisation
- ODI** Overseas Development Institute
- OECD** Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- ORS** oral rehydration salts
- PSE** poverty and social exclusion
- SDG** Sustainable Development Goal
- STEPS** Social, Technological and Environmental Pathways to Sustainability
- TNC** transnational corporation
- UK** United Kingdom
- UNCTAD** United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
- UNDP** United Nations Development Programme
- US** United States
- USAID** United States Agency for International Development